



The 6th Annual Dads Matter Too! Virtual Fatherhood Conference

Proudly Presents:

Reshaping Fatherhood: Striving for Equality and Equity When
Engaging Fathers of Color



Hosted by CT DCF Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team

In Coloration with:

My People Clinical Services LLC,

Central Connecticut State University HEALTHYfellows / Man Enough Support Initiative

&

Department of Social Services: Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative



The 6th Annual Dads Matter Too! FELT Fatherhood Virtual Conference

Conference Theme: Reshaping Fatherhood: Striving for Equality and Equity When Engaging Fathers of Color

Dates:

- September 17, 2020 9:00-1:00pm (4 Hours)
- September 18, 2020 12:00-4:00pm (4 Hours)

Location: Virtual Platform provided by the Hispanic Coalition: ZOOM

Registration: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0vfuCspzoiE9UlyCfY0fpssujY2Zfi--Sk>

Number Participants/Registration: 300

Audience: All DCF, Partner CT State Agencies, Community Providers, Foster Parents, Caregivers, Legislators, State Representatives, Fatherhood Initiative Stakeholders, All Types of Father and Father-Like-Figures, All Types of Mothers and Mother-Like-Figures, Adolescents, and College Student

Cost: Free for All

CEC's : 8 pending NASW approval

Discussion: The untimely deaths of several African American males in America have refocused our attention on the socio-ecological risks facing men of color. Further, these events continue to highlight the direct and indirect linkages between these social experiences and well-being disparities (i.e., educational attainment, mental and physical health) impacting men of color. Given that these social-contextual risks have implications that reverberate throughout the lifespan, research has sought to examine social factors that can promote positive developmental trajectories and reduce disparities for men of color.

During this two-day virtual conference, participants will focus on the roles and contributions of fathers, especially fathers of color. Although a larger public dialogue has centered on fatherhood in the African American/Latino communities, much of the discussion has emphasized the negative impacts of father absence. This larger discourse, which has projected an overwhelmingly negative image of African American and Latino fathers, often does not discuss the positive impacts on the lives of their children. Now, more than ever, it is time to reframe this discussion toward a strength based and socially embedded perspective on fathers' involvement and engagement. Doing so will contribute to the development of evidence-based programming and policy targeting fathers of color and their children.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Day 1 Tentative Schedule:

- 9:00-9:30 am Pre-Test for CEC with "Fatherhood Manologues" video
Open Remarks from Commissioner Vannessa Dorantes &
Dr. Toro, CCSU President
- 9:30-9:45 am Department Social Services' Program Manager Anthony Judkins on
the MOU and the Aspen

(Poll Check In)
- 9:45 -11:00 am Keynote Speaker: Dr. Reginald J. Eadie with Q&A

(Poll Check In)
- 11:00-11:15 am DCF Staff Champion Highlight: Heaven Lee Trenard (Q&A) then
transition to second "Fatherhood Manologues" Video: with
introduction from Abdul-Rahmaan I. Muhammad: Poll to Follow
- 11:15-11:45 am Breakthrough Series Collaborative Presentation

(Poll Check In)
- 11:45- 12:30 Deputy Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly: DCF transitioning to Anti-
Racism Practice and her personal connection to the work
- 12:30-1:00 pm Closing remarks from Mr. Williams Fothergill on Change of Action
Plan

"Fatherhood Manologues" Video Post-Test for CEC

Day 2 Tentative Schedule:

- 12:00-12:30 pm Pre-Test for CEC- while "Fatherhood Manologues" video plays
Open Remarks from Commissioner 's Office

(Poll Check In)
- 12:30-1:45 pm Keynote Speaker: Dr. Wizdom Powell with Q&A

(Poll Check In)
- 1:45-2:00 pm DCF Staff Champion Highlight Loren Papagoda (Q&A) then
transition to "Fatherhood Manologues" with Poll
- 2:00-2:45 pm Presentation by Doug Edwards founder and Program Director of
Real Dads Forever on **Connecting with Fathers Virtual Program
Facilitation Challenges and Solutions**

(With Poll Check In)
- 2:45-3:30 Panel of CT Leadership & Administration:
Q&A on fatherhood practice and policy, especially on working
with fathers of color
- 3:30-4:00 pm Closing remarks from Mr. Williams Fothergill on Final Change of
Action Plan

"Fatherhood Manologues" Video during Post Test for CEC

***Schedule May Change**

KEYNOTE PRESENTERS:

Dr. Reginald J. Eadie, MD, is an accomplished and innovative leader in transforming health care and patient care to meet the needs of the 21st century.

Born and raised in Detroit, Eadie began his journey towards becoming a physician—a career goal he established at the age of 7. He is a board-certified, emergency medicine physician. Dr. Eadie earned his Bachelor of Science degree, with magna cum laude honors, from South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Following undergraduate school, he returned to Michigan to earn his medical degree from Wayne State University School of Medicine. In April 2008, he was named the vice President of Medical Affairs (VPMA) at DMC Harper University Hospital/Hutzel Women's Hospital. Two years later he was appointed CEO at DMC Detroit Receiving Hospital where he served as CEO from July 2010 through December 2011. He next served as CEO of DMC Sinai-Grace Hospital from January 2012 through October 2013. During that time he enrolled in the Michigan State University Broad Executive MBA program which he completed in May 2013. This prepared him for his next assignment of serving as CEO of both DMC Detroit Receiving Hospital and DMC Harper/Hutzel Women's Hospital from October 2013 through October 2015. His primary goal was to grow market share of both facilities while integrating them into a 900 bed facility. He began his final role as a Detroit based Healthcare Executive with an appointment to the Detroit Medical Center's Regional Chief Operating Officer in August of 2015.

Dr. Eadie & his lovely wife Kimberly left Detroit to join the Trinity Health Of New England team as President and CEO in April of 2018.

His community talents are not limited to medicine as he published his first book in 2008 titled, *How to Eat & Live Longer*. In the book, he uses his biblical & medical knowledge and experience as a weight-loss physician for more than 10 years to address the health challenges facing inner-city residents. His book has been listed on numerous best sellers' lists and he has been featured in *Ebony* and *Essence* magazines and the guest on radio programs across the country. He has a soon-to-be released second book titled, *Eating from the Tree of Life*.

Dr. Wizdom Powell, PhD is Director of the Health Disparities Institute and Associate Professor of Psychiatry at UConn Health. She serves as the President of the American Psychological Association, Division 51 Men and Masculinities, and is an honorary professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa. Formerly, Dr. Powell was Associate Professor at Health Behavior at UNC-Chapel Hill's Gillings School of Global Public Health and Research Associate Professor in UNC's Department of Social Medicine. Dr. Powell also served as



Associate Director of the Center for Health Equity Research, faculty member at UNC's Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, and Director of the UNC's Men's Health Research Lab.

In 2011-2012, she was appointed by President Obama to serve as a White House Fellow to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta. In this role she provided subject matter expertise on Military Mental Health (e.g., PTSD, Suicide, and Military Sexual Trauma). Her community-based research focuses on the role of modern racism and gender norms on African American male health outcomes and healthcare inequities. She has published numerous peer-reviewed articles and book chapters including ones in the American Journal of Public Health, Journal of General Internal Medicine, Behavioral Medicine, and Child Development.

In addition to being a White House Fellow, she is an American Psychological Association (APA) Minority, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kaiser Permanente Burch, Institute of African American Research, and Ford Foundation Fellow who received a Ph.D. and M.S. in Clinical Psychology and M.P.H. from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. She serves as chair of the APA's workgroup on Health Disparities in Boys and Men and co-chair of the Health Committee for President Obama's My Brother's Keeper Initiative in Durham County.

In recognition of her public service to boys and men, she received the American Psychological Association's (D51) Distinguished Professional Service Award. In 2015, she received the prestigious Phillip and Ruth Hettleman Prize for Outstanding Artistic and Scholarly Achievement by Young Faculty. Dr. Powell was awarded a 2017 academic writing residency at the Bellagio Center from the Rockefeller Foundation. During this highly competitive residency, Dr. Powell will work with other global leaders on strategies for transforming social and healthcare system landscapes to address gendered health inequities among vulnerable males. Most recently, she was selected as a Health Innovator Fellow by the Aspen Institute. In addition to being a White House Fellow, she is an American Psychological Association (APA) Minority, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kaiser Permanente Burch, Institute of African American Research, and Ford Foundation Fellow who received a Ph.D. and M.S. in Clinical Psychology and M.P.H. from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. She serves as chair of the APA's workgroup on Health Disparities in Boys and Men and co-chair of the Health Committee for President Obama's My Brother's Keeper Initiative in Durham County.

In recognition of her public service to boys and men, she received the American Psychological Association's (D51) Distinguished Professional Service Award. In 2015, she received the prestigious Phillip and Ruth Hettleman Prize for Outstanding Artistic and Scholarly Achievement by Young Faculty. Dr. Powell was awarded a 2017 academic writing residency at the Bellagio Center from the Rockefeller Foundation. During this highly competitive residency, Dr. Powell will work with other global leaders on strategies for transforming social and healthcare system landscapes to address gendered health inequities among vulnerable males. Most recently, she was selected as a Health Innovator Fellow by the Aspen Institute.

Mr. William Fothergill, MA, MSW, LPC is a counselor at Counseling & Student Development, Central Connecticut State University and is the coordinator and founder of the CCSU HEALTHYfellows / Brotherhood Initiative (formerly Man Enough Support Initiative). HEALTHYfellows is a statewide health and retention campaign created to support the success of male college students. The campaign operates as a multidisciplinary health promotion initiative that works to eliminate health disparities by improving access to information, resources, wellness supports, and the delivery of gender competent care to male student populations. On September 12, 2019, Mr. Fothergill was honored with the



prestigious Distinguish Services Award for his decade hard work in campaigning to get public recognition of one of the school's first historic accomplishments: Conferring a degree on an African-American student. That graduate, Ebenezer Bassett, went on to become a prominent educator, civil rights leader and the nation's first black ambassador. Mr. Fothergill's passion for Ebenezer Bassett came out of the "Brotherhood Initiative". Mr. Fothergill always loved researching genealogies and was into the "pageantry" or traditions of the past. He felt that these were wonderful teaching tools. When thinking about the Brotherhood Initiative,

Mr. Fothergill thought that they should have an image of a man who the students could identify with. He introduced the group to Ebenezer Bassett. It was Mr. Fothergill's dream to see Bassett recognized and his legacy preserved. To this end, he worked to have the Social Sciences Hall renamed as the Ebenezer D. Bassett Hall. He also worked with CCSU graduate and New Britain Mayor, Erin Stewart, to place a historic plaque downtown at the original site of CCSU's first building in CT in New Britain. With an even more ambitious plan, Mr. Fothergill hopes to see Bassett receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS:



COMMISSIONER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, Vanessa L

Dorantes, LMSW has worked for the State of CT's Department of Children and Families (DCF) since 1992 after receiving a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Teikyo Post University. She later earned a Master's degree in Social Work from the UCONN School of Social Work where she majored in Casework and Community Organization.

From 2004 until appointment as commissioner, she was an adjunct faculty member at Central CT State University where she has taught several elective and core competency Social Work courses including: Human Behavior in the Social Environment I & II, Social Welfare Policy & Services II, Communities, Child Welfare I & II as well as a cultural competency course.

She has served on the SW Advisory Boards of Central and western CT State Universities and currently the UCONN School of Social Work Board of Advocates.

As a licensed, Master Social Worker, Dorantes is also certified in Social Work field instruction from Southern CT State University and has supervised countless undergraduate and graduate level interns in Social Work and related fields from various universities in CT and neighboring states.

Within DCF, she has held just about every position in the Social Work job class series. In 2014, she was appointed as Regional Administrator to the state's northwest corner— a CT DCF region that encompasses 43 diverse cities and towns. Dorantes also served as a tri-chair of DCF's Statewide Racial Justice Workgroup which has chronicled the Department's journey in two national webinar series.

In January 2019, Dorantes proudly accepted Governor Ned Lamont's nomination and was confirmed as the state of CT's first African American DCF Commissioner where she oversees the Department's 3,200 staff members.

As DCF Commissioner she coChairs CT's Alcohol & Drug Policy Council and the Health & Safety subcommittee for the Gov's Council on Women & Girls.

It is her mission to reinforce the expectation that the Department of Children and Families' staff Practice with Pride, Passion and Purpose together with People and Partners across the larger child welfare service delivery system.

"The urgency of Child Time is of critical importance. We must all work together now to improve future outcomes for the 14,500 families the Department is involved with on any given day. All of CT's children should be afforded the same opportunity to thrive in resilient families as members of supportive communities."

She is a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. which is an international service organization. Mrs. Dorantes has been happily married to Sean Dorantes since 1993 with whom she shares twin teenaged daughters Mia & Maci.



DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF OPERATIONS – Michael C. Williams, with over 25 years of progressive leadership in child welfare and behavioral health services, Michael C. Williams returns to DCF bringing a unique mixture of internal and external knowledge and experience. He is a graduate of Northeast Louisiana University of Monroe, University of Connecticut School of Social Work, Trinity College of Vermont, and the University of Connecticut's School of Business' Executive Program in Managed Care. He was CEO of Hartford Behavioral Health for 10 years, before joining DCF in 2003 as a Regional Administrator, then becoming Deputy Commissioner of Operations. As Deputy Commissioner, Mr.

Williams led the design and implementation of the Child Protection Practice Model (including introducing the Differential Response System), reform strategy for the state's Juvenile Justice services, and a comprehensive statewide racial justice strategy, among many other initiatives. To complement these efforts, Mr. Williams is a very engaged member of his community. He is an appointed member to the State of Connecticut's Commission on Health Equity, serves as a board member of the Bloomfield Board of Education and Black Administrators of Child Welfare, is a current participant in the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute of the Leadership Academy of Deans and Directors, and a member of the Mayor's Cabinet for Young Children. Most recently, Mr. Williams stepped out of state service to become President and CEO of Our Kids, a provider in Miami-Dade/Monroe, Florida.



DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATION, Jodi Hill-Lilly previously served as the Director of the Academy for Workforce Development. Having served 30 years in the Department, Ms. Hill-Lilly is recognized for her staff development acumen both here at DCF and across the country. Her leadership towards a holistic approach of workforce development is evidenced by programs such as the Mentoring Program and Leadership Academies for Supervisors and Managers, among others. She is on faculty for the National Child Welfare

Workforce Institute, is a consultant for the Children's Bureau, and is also the Vice President of the National Staff Development Training Association. Her early years with the Department as a frontline social worker and supervisor remains central to all of her work. Ms. Hill-Lilly is a member of this new administration's Transitional Team and has led the organizational assessment process.



Doug Edwards is the founder and director of Real Dads Forever, a Fatherhood Strategies Development organization. For the past 20 years, he has consulted with most CT state agencies that work with families. Doug also facilitates programs in schools, Family Development Centers, correctional institutions and churches around parental engagement, partnering and leadership with a focus on fathers and family Men. He provides professional development and training for colleges, universities, school systems and agencies. Doug is a member of the Executive Committee of the John S. Martinez CT Fatherhood Initiative, a member

of the Maternal Child Health Advisory committee of DPH, a Certified Family Development Credential facilitator, and chairman the Advisory Council of the Family Development Center of Eastern CT Health Network. The author of a curriculum, Paternal Prenatal Early Attachment, Doug has designed, written and facilitated fatherhood curricula, and teen parent workshops. He is passionate about inspiring and supporting family men to set their children up for success.



Tony Judkins, Program Manager for the Department of Social Services is responsible for the ongoing administration, development, planning, implementation, coordination and funding of the John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative of Connecticut, which is a broad-based, multi-agency, statewide program led by the Department of Social Services that is focused on changing the systems that can improve fathers' ability to be fully and

positively involved in the lives of their children.

FATHERHOOD CHAMPIONS:

Heaven Lee Trenard, Social Worker & Shirley Napol from the DCF Norwalk Office

Loren Papagoda, Social Worker & Rodney Moore, Social Work Supervisor from the DCF New Haven Office

MINI PRESENTATIONS WEAVED INTO THE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE EITHER BY VIDEO OR PANELS:

Facilitator: Abdul-Rahmaan I. Muhammad

Title: The Fatherhood "Manologues"

Target Audience: All

Overview: The Fatherhood "Manologues" is an exhilarating collection of short stories about fatherhood. Each story provides a unique point of view on being a father or being fathered. All the stories will take you on an emotional roller coaster that reminds the audience of the important role fathers play in the lives of their children. The significance of having an involved father or the impact of father absenteeism is felt in each of the personally delivered stories. With the societal stereotypes and social expectations wrapped tightly around the term "fatherhood" the Fatherhood "Manologues" is a much-needed artistic expression of men creating their own narratives. Funny, entertaining, serious and sad, these stories will have you wanting to reconnect and repair broken relationships; as well as, reflect on the bond with your own father.

Link to these videos: <https://www.themanhoodtree.com/fatherhood-manologues.html>

Facilitator: Doug Edwards

Title: Connecting with Fathers Virtual Program Facilitation Challenges and Solutions

Target Audience: All

Overview: Our work is a little harder these days. In an effort to support fathers by way of virtual programming, our ability to be effective is challenged. What gets in the way for a facilitator, and what gets in the way for a participant? How can we connect and deliver our programs successfully and what are a few things that work well? Let's explore it all together.

Facilitator: William Fothergill, MA, MSW, LPC

Title: A Conversation on Our Fathers: What's Our Plan Moving Forward

Target Audience: All

Description: Given the state of affairs, and the high level of anxieties across America, many are experiencing racial tension in their personal, educational and work lives. DCF will be facilitating a virtual discussion that involves the recognition and engagement of different perspectives on the emerged themes on racial justice as it relates to our practice on fathers' and their involvement within Connecticut.

FELT CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Anthony Gay, BA, Social Work Supervisor is the statewide Fatherhood Lead for the Department of Children and Families and currently oversees the Region 5 F.E.L.T. Mr. Gay spent almost two decades in the field of human services and approximately 10 years developing curricula and training. Mr. Gay has been with the Department for over 16 years with 7 of those years as a social work supervisor. He is currently an adolescent social worker supervisor for the Torrington DCF area office. Mr. Gay's fatherhood work for the state of Connecticut has been more than astonishing. Mr. Gay's efforts to make the state of Connecticut *"The Most Fatherhood Friendly State"* has been determinedly and rewarding. He has devoted his career in advocated for fatherhood engagement and ensuring fathers have a fair chance of being included in their children's lives.

In addition to his countless hours of fatherhood advocacy, Mr. Gay has also developed and provided training to state workers, community providers, correctional staff, correctional inmates, college students, teachers/college professors, parents, clergy and law enforcement personnel on the importance fatherhood engagement, maternal gatekeeping, implicit bias, media literacy, digital safety and other issues related to youth exploitation via social media and internet consumption.

Marcus Stallworth, LCSW: graduated from Fordham University with his MSW in 2005. Mr. Stallworth is the owner of Stallworth Counseling Services, LLC. His objective is to assist in with resolving immediate concerns by providing the necessary tools and strategies to address similar issues should they arise again in the future.

Working for Child Protective Services for the past 16 years, Mr. Stallworth has the insight on how loss, unexpected transitions, and stress impacts Human Behavior. His additional work with foster parents, incarcerated Fathers, and grieving Sandy Hook families continuously reminds him of the compassion necessary to help others during their most vulnerable times.

Mr. Stallworth's strength-based approach is relaxed and laid back yet forward enough to challenge to assess the role one play in their current situation. Mr. Stallworth believes true growth develops from taking ownership of your contribution (or lack thereof), and then finding ways to do better moving forward.

Abdul-Rahmaan I. Muhammad, MSW: is the executive director for My People Clinical Services LLC. in Hartford, CT. Mr. Muhammad has been employed for My People Clinical Services for over 12 years. My People Clinical Services, LLC have provided services for over 5,000 individuals, through both direct services and community initiatives. There are times when creative interventions and ideas must be used in order to get an individual past a difficult time and to a more productive place. By combining this mind set with highly trained, culturally competent and community focused individuals, My People was conceived.

Mr. Muhammad has also served as a motivational speaker for the Dream Chaser #1 since 1994. The Dream Support Network is an inspiration and motivational company that provides print materials, audio programs, seminars, workshops and excursions to encourage individuals to chase their dreams.

Mr. Muhammad graduated with his Bachelor of Science, Psychology from Tougao College in 1996. In 1999, he received his Masters in Social Worker from Clark Atlanta University.

Jennifer Rondini, LMSW, Program Supervisor Department of Children and Families: earned her BSW at Central Connecticut State University in 2005. In 2008, Ms. Rondini earned her MSW from Springfield College. In 2013, Ms. Rondini received her LMSW. Ms. Rondini began her career for the Department of Children and Families at the Waterbury Area Office in September of 2005. As a Social Worker, she gained three years of experience with Ongoing Services before transitioning to the Adolescent Unit. In June 2014, Ms. Rondini became a Social Work Supervisor for the Adolescent Unit. Ms. Rondini then joined the DCF Academy for Workforce Development in June of 2016 as a Child Welfare Trainer. In 2020, Ms. Rondini was promoted as a Program Supervisor for the Academy for Workforce Development. She currently oversees the in-service trainings for the Department.

Ms. Rondini has been an active member of the Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team since 2014. Ms. Rondini was raised by her single adolescent father; therefore, the value of fatherhood is deeply embedded into her core. She has assisted in coordinating the Dads Matter Too Fatherhood Conferences, Dads Matter Too Community Days and 5k races and co-facilitated several fatherhood trainings on adolescent fathers, maternal gatekeeping, fatherhood engagement and working with incarcerated fathers.

Jeffrey Gold, MSW Program Supervisor Department of Children and Families: After graduating from Central Connecticut State University with a Bachelor's in Social Work, Mr. Gold began his career with the Department of Children and Families in 1997. In 2001, Mr. Gold was selected to participate in the Department's Social Work Internship Program (SWIP) and subsequently obtained his Master's in Social Work from Springfield College in 2002. Mr. Gold has held the position of Social Worker, Social Worker Supervisor, Administrative Case Reviewer and has been a Program Supervisor since 2015. Mr. Gold is also a graduate of the Department's Mentoring Program. Since 2015, Mr. Gold has provided managerial oversight of Region 4's Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (FELT). Mr. Gold was previously a member of the Department's Statewide FELT Community of Practice and has participated in various workgroups to enhance work with respect to engaging fathers. In 2017, Mr. Gold was selected to participate in the Department's Striving Towards Excellent Practice (STEP) program where his work focused on improving the Department's policy and practice specific to fatherhood engagement. Through his participation in STEP, Mr. Gold's advocacy assisted with the implementation of contracted Fatherhood Engagement Services (FES) across all regions in the State of Connecticut. Mr. Gold has also contributed to promoting the Department's "Dads Matter Too" campaign and has helped to plan and organize Region 4's annual "Dads Matter Too" Community Awareness Day

events. Mr. Gold is a proud father to his seventeen-year-old daughter and is committed to ensuring all fathers are treated fairly and through a Racial Justice lens.

Joe Guion, Program Supervisor Department of Children and Families is proud father of two teenage children and is a devoted husband. Mr. Guion attended the University of Connecticut where he earned his BA in psychology and sociology. Following graduation, Mr. Guion worked for Community Mental Health Affiliates in New Britain then began his career with the Department of Children in Families in 2000. Mr. Guion worked as a Social Worker and a Supervisor in the Ongoing Services and Investigation divisions before being promoted in 2015. As a Program Supervisor, Mr. Guion oversees the Area Office training units. In May 2017, Mr. Guion helped launch the Fatherhood Engagement Services (FES) program in Region IV which served as a catalyst for the statewide FES programming that is in place today. In 2019, Mr. Guion was selected to represent the Hartford Office in a fatherhood Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) sponsored by the Federal government. This project will continue into 2021 and is focused on father and paternal relative engagement efforts. Mr. Guion is an active member of the Region IV Racial Justice team, is a mentor for the DCF Mentoring Program, and provides managerial oversight for the Region IV Fatherhood Engagement Leadership team that is in place to improve father and paternal relative engagement.

Steve Smith, Program Supervisor the Department of Children and Families: Mr. Smith began his career in the human services field, serving families and their youth committed to Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) and residing in group home and residential treatment settings. In 1996, Mr. Smith began his employment with DCF, as an Investigation's Social Worker then Supervisor. In 2006, Mr. Smith moved from the DCF's child welfare services to that of Juvenile Justice as a Program Manager, overseeing Parole Case Management Services and most recently with the Transitional Supports and Success Division. He has extensive experience with the cross section between child protection and criminal justice and administering programs and contracted services. He is responsible for oversight of contracted Fatherhood Engagement Services and coordination of Statewide FELT. Mr. Smith earned his bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Connecticut in 1990.

PARTNERSHIP OF THIS CONFERENCE:

The Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (F.E.L.T) Dads Matter Too! The CT Department of Children and Families developed and implemented strategies for supporting work with fathers and their families. The overarching goal of Dads Matter Too! is to increase the involvement of fathers and families in Connecticut's child welfare system. The Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (FELT) is a team of dedicated individuals who are committed to increasing engagement of fathers and their families within all communities throughout the state of Connecticut. Regions 4 & 5 FELT has hosted multiple events/activities within their DCF region which consists of Hartford, Manchester, Waterbury, Danbury, & Torrington. Events have included the Dads Matter Too Community Awareness Day and Fatherhood 5k race, Community Trunk or Treats, Fishing Derbies, Listening Forums, Men 101 and Show Your Love fatherhood informational presentations, FELT Film & Food lunches, Father and Children Movie Nights, and the annual Dads Matter Too Fatherhood Conference held at Connecticut State University.

Current FELT goals are the following:

- for fathers and father figures, to become and/or stay involved in their children's lives;
- to promote awareness of the crucial role of fathers/father figures, and foster fathers in a child's life;
- to provide linkages for fathers to community providers and public services;
- to improve DCF's current service delivery to father; and
- to educate DCF staff and community providers to better serve fathers and their children.

Central Connecticut State University HEALTHYfellows / Man Enough Support Initiative Provided through CCSU Student Wellness Services, this campaign is a "MENrichment" and personal development program created to support the success of Central Connecticut State University college men. The campaign exists as a multidisciplinary health promotion initiative created as a vehicle to eliminate health disparities by improving access to information, resources, and wellness care services to young men. The campaign exists as a gender specialized support system dedicated to improving health outcomes.

The HEALTHYfellows/Man Enough Support Initiative campaign was created as a tool to help young men mature into healthy individuals while providing support resources to those working with them. The campaign focuses on facilitating conversations and dialogues where young men can safely learn, process, and organize (mobilize) outreach events. HEALTHYfellows will provide guidance and will promote wellness by encouraging young men to adopt lifestyle practices that will lead to optimal health and well-being.

My People Clinical Services (MPCS) is a mission driven, community based social service organization established in the city of Hartford, CT in 2005 to Support, Empower, and Rebuild the lives of individuals and families we serve. As a collective group of culturally competent and diverse professionals consisting of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists, Fatherhood Engagement Support Staff, Parent Educators, Therapeutic Support Specialists, and Professional Human Service Practitioners we aim to advocate, empower, and strengthen the lives of all

individuals and families we serve keeping in mind our mission “To enable My People to help Your People so that Our People will succeed”.

Recognizing the urgency of social and mental health needs of youth and families, our staff is recruited and trained to provide immediate therapeutic and crisis intervention support services. Our treatment services are non-traditional, creative and holistic which highlights several of the strengths of our staff that are dedicated to the wellness of our community. My People Clinical Services staff are trained to advocate and empower youth to transition to independence, support and guide parents receiving supervised visits, provide therapeutic supports and interventions to support mental health and overall well being, engage, guide and help fathers so they are included, not excluded from the process, teach and train prospective foster parents and integrate into the school system to incorporate preventative strategies that allow students to learn without disruption.

The Hispanic Coalition of Greater Waterbury, Inc. provides needed services as identified by their community. Services shall be provided through advocacy, collaboration, and education. Our goal is to foster the creation of successful individuals by enhancing the quality of life of our Hispanic Families and the diverse population in the City of Waterbury, CT. he Coalition has over two decades of social services experience in the greater Waterbury area and is a principal leader for bilingual services, advocacy, collaboration, education, and policy development in the Latino community. The Hispanic Coalition Developmental Support Services are designed to address the mental health needs of Latino children in the greater Waterbury area as well as an advocate for the provision of bicultural/bilingual mental health services. Through its mission-focused programs and the dedication of the Board and staff, the Coalition has expanded its scope and services. The Coalition currently provides a number of services to the Greater Waterbury community. The services include and not limited to: Case Management, Immigration proceedings, youth development, adult day center, cultural enrichment programs, advocacy, referral services and, translation of vital documents, social and educational services for families and family support for our diverse community at large.

The Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) is a broad-based, statewide collaborative effort led by the Department of Social Services, focused on changing the systems that can improve fathers’ ability to be fully and positively involved in the lives of their children. First implemented after the passage of legislation in 1999, state and local partners have been working together for two decades to make changes to policy and practice in order to better meet the needs of fathers, with an emphasis on those who may not be living in the same households with their children. While focused on fathers, the efforts of the *CFI* are not done at the expense of mothers. Children are at the heart of this collaborative effort of state and local partners. We focus on supports for fathers in order to not just help them in their fathering role, but also to support mothers and children. It is not an either/or situation, and we do not seek to take services from one to give to the other.

Connecticut was the first state in the country to pass legislation on fatherhood – many states before us had Governor’s Commissions or Councils, but no one legislatively required the work. Key leaders at the local and state levels in our state came together for a common goal, as they continued to see children who had been impacted by father-absence and recognized this was a nonpartisan issue.

The late John S. Martinez , former Connecticut State Representative in New Haven, played an integral role in the passage of the legislation, which had bi-partisan support and was comprehensive and instructive truly an example of comprehensive social policy reflecting a desire and vision to effect positive change for fathers, families and children in Connecticut. Therefore, after he passed away in 2002 from injuries sustained in a car accident, the initiative was renamed in his honor.

Recognizing the continued work of all CFI partners across the state whether at the state or local level, in 2015 upon the completion of the Strategic Plan the partners agreed the working name for our efforts will be the *Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative*.

In Dedication to Christine Keys



March 31, 1969 - August 10, 2020

Christine Keys, LMSW was the Director of Permanency Services at Klingberg Family Centers located in New Britain, CT. She had worked in the field of child welfare for 26 years in both the private sector and CT DCF. In addition, she oversaw the Therapeutic Foster Care and Adoption Services at Klingberg,

Ms. Keys initiated the Fatherhood360 Program at Klingberg. She served on multiple committees and workgroups focused on permanency and child well-being as well as a standing member of the statewide John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative. Ms. Keys also served on the advisory council and trained for the Parents with Cognitive Limitations Workgroup.

Ms. Keys has been a part of the Dads Matter Too Conference for multiple years as a breakout presenter. Ms. Keys was described as a tireless advocate for youth and teens living in difficult circumstances. Among her peers, she was known as a supportive leader, inspiring trainer, active mentor and caring colleague.

This year's conference is being dedicated to Ms. Keys, for her kindness and devotion, and for her endless support for fatherhood work; her selflessness will always be remembered. From the CT Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team, Ms. Keys will be deeply missed.

Special Acknowledgements:

Vannessa Dorantes, Department of Children and Families Commissioner

Jodi Hill-Lilly, Deputy Commissioner of Administration

Michael C. Williams, Deputy Commissioner of Operations

Tracy Davis, Academy for Workforce Development Director